



GOOD FRUIT
PROJECT

A Christian Case Against LGBTQ Change Efforts



Q Christian
Fellowship

WHO WE ARE



The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people. We work to save young lives by providing support through free and confidential suicide prevention and crisis intervention programs on platforms where young people spend their time: a 24/7 phone lifeline, chat, and text. Trevor also runs TrevorSpace, the world's largest safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth, and operates innovative education, research, and advocacy programs.



Q Christian Fellowship

Q Christian Fellowship cultivates radical belonging among LGBTQ+ people and allies through a commitment to growth, community, and relational justice. We are a diverse community with varied backgrounds, cultures, theologies, and denominations, drawn together through our love of Christ and our belief that every person is a beloved child of God.

About This Partnership: Q Christian Fellowship is a Christian nonprofit dedicated to pursuing a world where all LGBTQ people are fully loved by family, church, and community. The Trevor Project is a secular, research-driven organization that is on a mission to end suicide among LGBTQ youth. However different, the two organizations are united in their common experience of serving LGBTQ people who have been profoundly affected, and all-too-often deeply wounded, by the experience of conversion therapy in a Christian context. The Good Fruit Project represents our effort to bring together our different perspectives - Q Christian speaking to theology, with The Trevor Project bringing its experience supporting LGBTQ mental health - in the hope of creating something that will empower our various communities to better understand each other, and, God willing, may ultimately save lives.

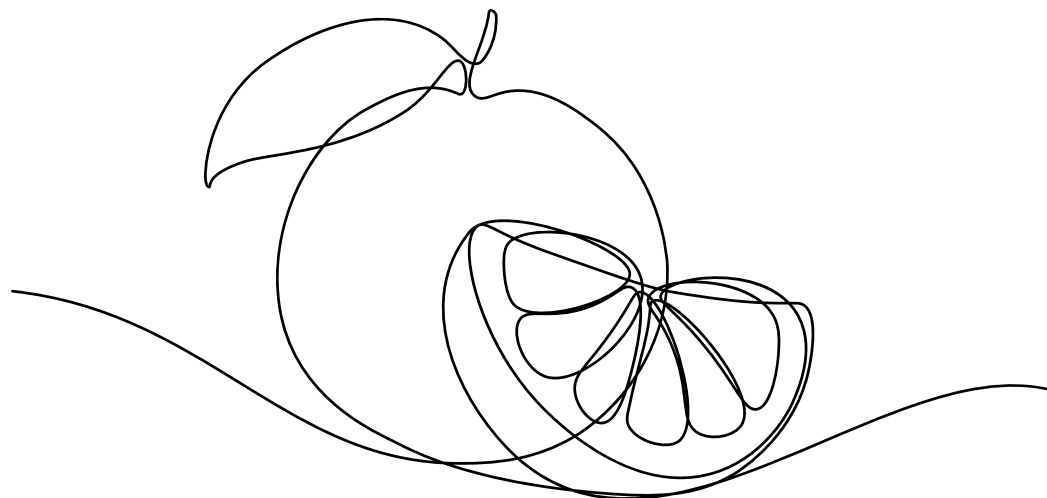


TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	Introduction
5	Terms Defined
6	Facts & Figures
7	Let Us Reason Together
8	Conversion Therapy in Christian Communities
10	The Resurgence of Conversion Therapy
12	The Fruit of LGBTQ Conversion Therapy & Ex-Gay Theology
14	“Love the Sinner...”
15	“Go and Sin No More.” What Must Change
16	The Good News; Acceptance Saves Lives
17	Conclusion
17	The Good Fruit Statement on LGBTQ Conversion Therapy
18	Resources
19	LGBTQ Terminology

INTRODUCTION

Every good tree bears good fruit,
but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

MATTHEW 7:17 (NIV)

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning¹) people are members of every community, including religious communities; for many, faith is an important part of their lives and identities.

While for many religion and faith can be sources of comfort, beauty, and meaning, unfortunately, many LGBTQ people across centuries have been told by their families or faith communities that there is something wrong or even sinful about how they experience romantic love, or how they live in terms of their gender.

Too often, LGBTQ people are told that in order to maintain their place in a faith community, they should seek some kind of transformation by the power of God to help them live “correctly” as a man or woman - in other words, to “pray away” or change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

While this advice may be well-intentioned, the truth is that such change efforts can be a form of spiritual rejection, which is mentally, physically, and emotionally harmful.

The goal of this document is not to place blame, to create theological division, or to throw stones. Nor is this about politics or secular laws; with

regard to conversion therapy within the church, what is at issue for Christians is not so much human laws, but obedience to God’s higher law of love.

It is our hope that this document will help people of faith, in particular Christians, come to understand that the path to truly loving their LGBTQ friends, family, and neighbors is not through sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts, but the wholehearted acceptance and grace that is at the core of Christian love. Ultimately, we hope that people of faith will feel called to commit to ending the practice of spiritual conversion

therapy in their communities. That is the change that will bear the good fruit that we all seek.

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¹ For definitions of these and other terms used throughout this document, please see the glossary.

TERMS DEFINED

Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts come in many forms and are known by many names, including [conversion therapy](#), [reparative therapy](#), [ex-gay ministries](#), and more. Whatever it is called, conversion therapy includes any treatments or practices intended to attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity (for example, from gay to straight or from transgender to cisgender), and includes any efforts to change a person's gender expression (to make a person act more masculine or feminine, for example), behaviors, or to reduce or eliminate sexual or romantic attraction or feelings toward a person of the same gender.

While some conversion therapists continue to use physical methods, including painful aversive conditioning, the most common techniques in the United States today include [talk therapies](#) where practitioners treat a person's sexual orientation or gender identity as an addiction that is believed to be the result of abuse and childhood trauma, or otherwise a result of the person's environment and upbringing.

Especially for faith-based providers, these practices often involve teachings pulled from religious texts, prayer, spiritual discipline, and practices modeled off of twelve-step programs

targeting [sexual brokenness](#), [unwanted same-sex attractions](#), or [gender confusion](#).

Importantly, conversion therapy does not include counseling that helps a person to cope, find social support, or explore their identity, including interventions to prevent or address unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices, as long as the counseling is sexual orientation- and gender identity-neutral.



FACTS & FIGURES

The Family Acceptance Project [has found](#) that adolescents who grew up in religious families were more likely to experience change efforts. They also found that “parent/caregiver efforts to change an adolescent’s sexual orientation are associated with multiple indicators of poor health and adjustment in young adulthood,” and youth whose parents also sent them to a religious leader or therapist to attempt to change them had severe depression and attempted suicide at about triple the rate of youth who nobody tried to change.

Conversion therapy is opposed by prominent national and international professional medical associations, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

In 2009, the American Psychological Association Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation (with the involvement of Mark Yarhouse, professor at Regent University) concluded that efforts to change sexual orientation and gender identity are unlikely to produce anticipated outcomes and can pose unintended harmful side effects to participants, such as a sense of having wasted time and resources, confusion, shame, guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, loss of faith, decreased self-esteem and authenticity towards others, increased self-hatred and negative perceptions, social withdrawal, a feeling of being dehumanized and untrue to self, depression, increased substance abuse and high-risk sexual behaviors, and suicidality.

As of September 2020, twenty states and dozens of cities have passed laws prohibiting licensed professionals, including therapists, from attempting to change a minor’s sexual orientation or gender identity. These laws, however, do not regulate unlicensed religious ministries that attempt to change sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Williams Institute at the [UCLA School of Law](#) estimates that:

698,000

adults in the U.S. have received conversion therapy; half received it as minors.

57,000

estimated number of youth (ages 13-17) who will receive conversion therapy from religious or spiritual advisors before they reach the age of 18.

In 2020, The Trevor Project surveyed more than 40,000 LGBTQ youth about topics related to their mental health. This survey found that 6 out of 10 youth had experienced somebody - a parent, pastor, friend, or anybody else - trying to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

14%

said a religious leader had attempted to convince them to change.

10%

said they’d actually experienced conversion or reparative therapy.

6%

from their personal pastor or priest

5%

from another religious leader or counselor

78%

of the 10 percent of youth who said they had experienced conversion therapy reported being subjected to it as minors.

2X

LGBTQ youth who had undergone conversion therapy were more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide in the previous 12 months.

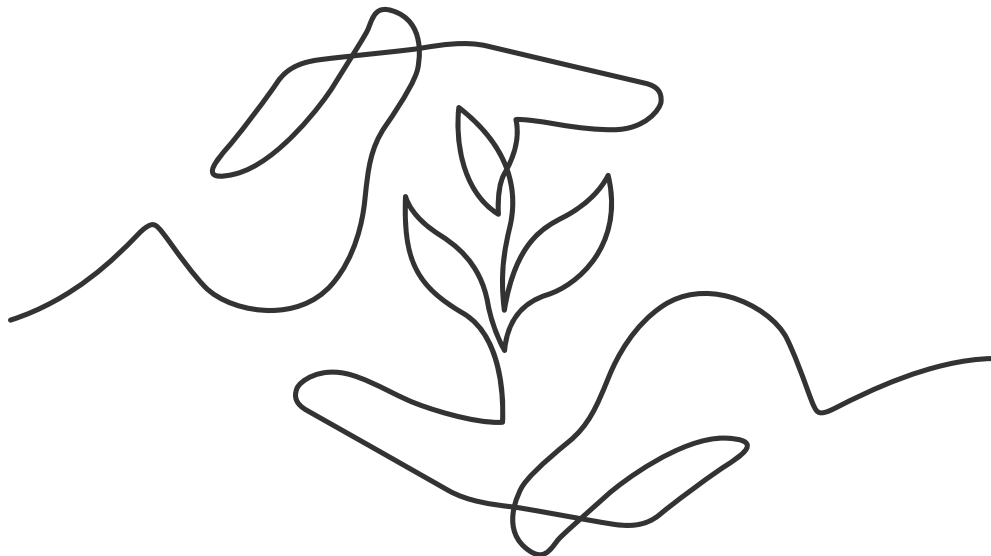
LET US REASON TOGETHER

Ending conversion therapy in Christian communities may mean making space for different beliefs about sex and gender. Thankfully, differing understandings within Christianity are not uncommon. While the exact number is debated, there are an [estimated 250-1200 Christian denominations](#) within the United States alone.¹ Dr. David P. Gushee, distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University, [acknowledges that](#):

Every generation has its hottest of all hot-button issues, the issue that becomes the litmus test of everyone's orthodoxy and provokes conflicts sometimes leading to schism. In earlier generations it was slavery, or segregation, or apartheid, or Nazism, or abortion, or temperance, or Sabbath or tongue-speaking. I am old enough to have lived through the 1980/1990s fight over women's roles in the Church among Baptists and evangelicals, which led more than one congregation into schism. This LGBTQ+ issue...is doing the same thing.²

There are times in which one part of the Church may learn from another that their practices are harming others. The hope is that we may learn from each other and come to a fuller understanding of the impact theology has on others. While we may disagree on some topics, we can and must do so while also prioritizing the physical safety and mental and emotional wellbeing of people. As Paul says in Romans 14:19, "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (NRSV).

As more people come out and live their lives as faithful, LGBTQ Christians, their friends, family members, and faith communities find themselves reconsidering their personal theology. A growing number of individuals are changing their minds about what they once believed to be true about LGBTQ people. Far from betraying Christian tradition, these changes for many are part of an ongoing journey toward seeing God's beloved community on earth "as it is in Heaven."



CONVERSION THERAPY IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Despite evidence of harm and an ever-growing community of conversion therapy survivors sharing their stories, efforts to change sexual orientation and/or gender identity remain sadly prevalent today, especially among faith-based practitioners.

Religious or spiritual ministries that attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity take many forms, including:

- Organizations solely devoted to conversion therapy or “ex-gay” theology, often as part of national networks. (i.e. Restored Hope Network, former Exodus International ministries, Living Hope, Brothers Road, First Stone Ministries, CHANGED, etc.)
- Licensed counselors who emphasize their religious point-of-view and place it above the requirements of their professional ethics (and the guidance of their professional organizations, like the American Psychological Association)
- Spiritual directors or life coaches. These individuals are typically not licensed professionals and are not regulated.
- Broader ministries dealing with sexual issues, including sex addiction or pornography, that treat homosexuality or being transgender as illnesses or problems
- Church counseling offices or pastoral counselors (which may include pastors)
- Exorcisms; “prayer warrior ministries;” laying-on-of-hands; shunning
- Conditioning employment, leadership roles, religious school attendance, or membership on attending conversion therapy, etc.

People may not even be aware that these practices are occurring within or with the blessing of their own church, or that their spiritual leaders may be referring members of their church to these kinds of ministries, but all Christians should feel empowered to ask the questions that will bring such practices to light and to ask that they be stopped.

The Christian ex-gay movement often conflates being LGBTQ with reckless and damaging behavior. Individuals are made to believe that their character flaws, mental health struggles, and regrets in life stem from being LGBTQ and that their experience of same-sex attraction, gender dysphoria, or gender diversity stems from their experience of abuse or trauma.

In reality, some of those issues may have never manifested had LGBTQ people not been shamed in the first place.

To be clear, most Christian counselors, even those with conservative theology, do not engage in conversion therapy. Unfortunately, several organizations that many Christians look to for counseling resources or mental health support, including the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, the American Association of Christian Counselors, and Focus on the Family's Christian Counselors Network, do promote various forms of change efforts in their policies or materials.



RALPH JONES, JR.

"Through a vocal tremor and teary eyes, I spoke with a trusted spiritual advisor on-campus, confessing my secret shame and like many others, I was referred to a Christian reparative conversion counseling program. I prayed, I cried, I screamed at God, wanting to end my life as none of those things proved to be any more productive than the other, and I could not imagine a life or a future for myself unchanged. In the end, it wasn't a person, a teaching, or my emotions which convinced me it was possible to be gay and follow Christ. It was the Holy Spirit—present, living, breathing, speaking."

For example, the American Association of Christian Counselors 2014 Code of Ethics states:

1-120-f: Application to Homosexual, Bisexual and Transgendered Behavior Christian counselors do not condone or advocate for the pursuit of or active involvement in homosexual, bisexual or transgendered behaviors and lifestyles. Counselors may agree to and support the desire to work through issues of homosexual and transgendered identity and attractions, but will not describe or reduce human identity and nature to sexual orientation or preference, and will encourage sexual celibacy or biblically-prescribed sexual behavior while such issues are being addressed.

Faith-based conversion therapy is often based on the belief that only heterosexual/"straight" relationships are righteous in the eyes of God, and that "same-sex attracted" individuals should pursue a heterosexual marriage, or be pressured into celibacy.

Individuals who are transgender or nonbinary are likewise encouraged to pursue traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" gender roles. Those with gender dysphoria are also encouraged to seek out pastoral counseling or clinical therapy to "reinforce their perception of themselves as their biological sex." Proponents of ex-gay theology will often say that God's will is for "men to be men" (Adam) and "women to be women" (Eve), regardless of the effect that has on people who experience their gender identity differently.



REV. DANNY CORTEZ

"I pastored Southern Baptist churches for about 20 years. For most of that time, whenever someone confided in me that they were gay or lesbian, our church policy was to recommend conversion therapy. At the time, we believed that change in someone's orientation was possible. However, as the years passed, it became evident that calling them to change wasn't helping. In fact, it was quite the opposite. People were falling into hopelessness, despair and self hate. There began this internal conflict I had in prescribing something that was in effect, harmful. I knew something was wrong but I had always been told that the Bible was clear. However, there were two passages of Scripture that kept standing out. The first was in Matthew 7 where Jesus says, "Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." The second one was in Romans 14, where Paul writes, "Love does no harm." As I sought to hear more intently the stories of LGBTQ Christians, it became evident that telling them they needed to change was causing harm."

THE RESURGENCE OF CONVERSION THERAPY

In 2013, the largest and most powerful ex-gay ministry, Exodus International, shut down after the executive director, Alan Chambers, admitted that he no longer believed homosexuality could or should be “cured” and that “99.9 percent” of people who had tried had failed. Many other “ex-gays” and former conversion therapy practitioners have since joined him in declaring change efforts to be harmful and ineffective.

However, in recent years new leaders have emerged to take up the mantle, employing similar practices with modern branding and slick marketing campaigns. Launched in 2018 as an initiative of Bethel Church in Redding, CA, the association of ex-gay ministries known as CHANGED adopted Exodus International’s original slogan, “Change is Possible,” slightly tweaked to read “Changed is Possible.” These movements have capitalized on the increasing visibility of gender identity issues, finding new markets in parents fearful that their children may be transgender. Modern conversion therapy advocacy is often marked by graphic and misinformed descriptions of medical transition processes, with no reference to the extensive safeguards involved.

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For some, [transitioning is life-saving](#) and deemed best-practice medical care by the major medical professional organizations, including the American Medical Association.

Ex-gay/trans ministries will often explicitly deny that their teachings and practices constitute “conversion therapy.” Knowing the phrase “conversion therapy” carries a lot of baggage (and even legal liability for fraud), ex-LGBTQ ministries have intentionally distanced themselves from the term and rebranded themselves as equipping individuals with tools to fight for their own spiritual freedom, or to encourage “sexual fluidity.” The Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity (formerly National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality, founded by early conversion therapists Joseph Nicolosi and Charles Socarides) prefers to describe their practices as “Sexual Attraction Fluidity Exploration in Therapy (SAFE-T).”

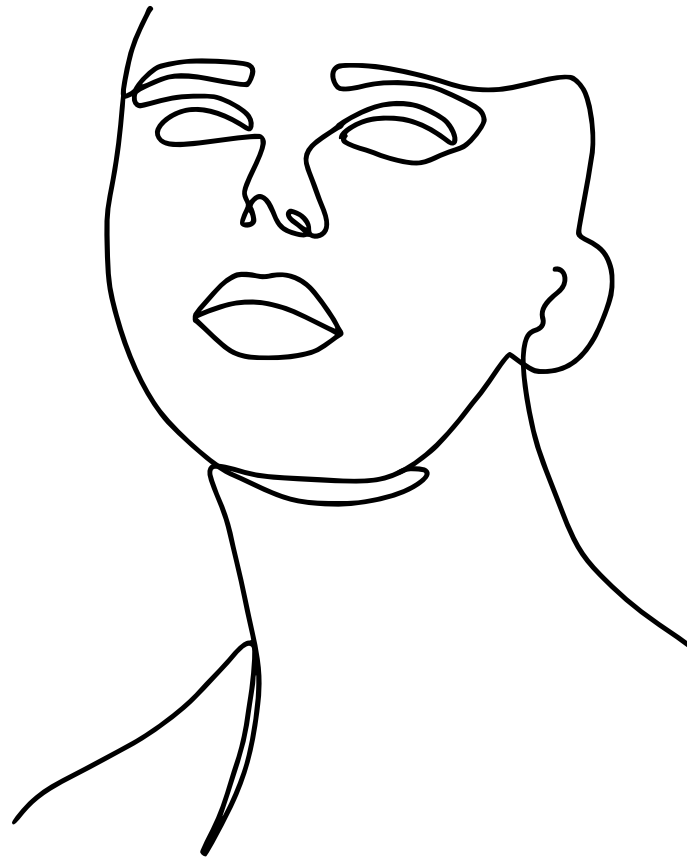
“Change allowing,” “healing sexual brokenness,” “freedom of choice,” or “embracing one’s true identity in Christ” are some terms that in the context of sexual orientation or gender identity often conceal conversion therapy efforts.

One ex-gay leader asserts that “change-allowing and exploration therapy, is largely an effort to bring relational wholeness and wellbeing to people who experience undesired same sex attraction so that they can live ‘normal’ lives...” What is left unsaid is that LGBTQ people do live happy and productive lives every day. Some of the harm and discrimination experienced by LGBTQ people stems from the false claims propagated by conversion therapists that unless LGBTQ people change they are destined to live a life without purpose or fulfillment.



PAULA STONE WILLIAMS

"From the time I was three or four years of age, I knew I was transgender. But I grew up in a fundamentalist family with a father who was a pastor and there was no way I could tell anyone, so I buried the truth. For decades, I buried it. But the call toward authenticity has all the subtlety of a smoke alarm, and eventually decisions have to be made. I know that if I had not transitioned, I would have lived a life of quiet desperation. It took me five decades to find the courage to transition, but it was the most important decision I ever made."



THE FRUIT OF LGBTQ CONVERSION THERAPY & EX-GAY THEOLOGY

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

MATTHEW 7:15-18 (NRSV)

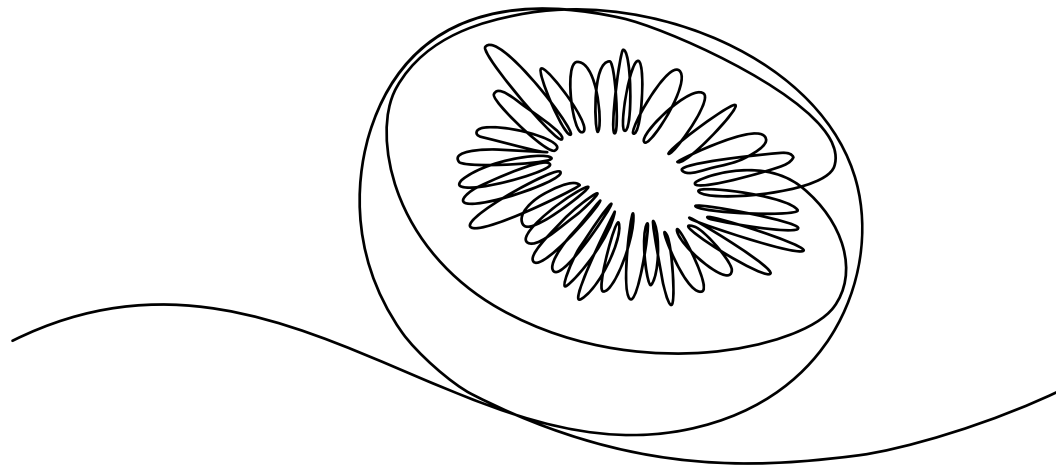
Many LGBTQ people fear or have been told that someday they would be cast into the fires of hell because their sexuality or gender identity makes them “bad trees” bearing “bad fruit.” But Paul says in Galatians 5:22-23; “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (NIV). If something bears blatantly bad fruit on Earth, as seen with conversion therapy, it should be questioned, and if necessary, rejected, repented of, and opposed.

As a suicide prevention organization, The Trevor Project works firsthand with LGBTQ youth in crisis, many of whom are survivors of conversion therapy. Trevor has also supported LGBTQ youth who are afraid to come out to their family because of the fear that their relatives

will force them to go to conversion therapy; a fear that is only reinforced when they regularly hear derogatory remarks about how being LGBTQ “is a choice,” “demonic,” jeopardizes their salvation, or that conversion therapy is otherwise necessary to “fix” them. Other LGBTQ youth contact The Trevor Project because they are in conversion therapy, it is not working, and their feelings of isolation and failure contribute to suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Some youth have told Trevor that, after coming out to their parents as LGBTQ, their family members responded by threatening to cut off contact and support unless they agreed to attend conversion therapy. Others have been estranged from family, with the restoration of relationships conditioned explicitly on their consent to attempt to change. This rejection hurts and leaves too many youth feeling like conversion therapy might be their “only” option.

LGBTQ people are asked in conversion therapy ministries to “pick up their cross and lay their desires and loneliness at the feet of Jesus.” But what happens when Jesus doesn’t take those desires and loneliness away? Many of these individuals feel condemned to live their lives alone, never able to fully commit to a relationship with the opposite sex. Others enter into unhealthy heterosexual marriages in an attempt to do what they are told is the right thing and find themselves still struggling years later. Many



LGBTQ people find themselves turning to self-destructive behaviors as they unsuccessfully fight their affections and true identity - all, ironically, while being told that it is the “gay lifestyle” that bears “bad fruit.” In reality, the real danger lies in suppressing who God made us to be.

Practitioners of conversion therapy “tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.” Matthew 23:4 (NRSV). Church leaders and family members should not lay impossible burdens on the shoulders of LGBTQ people.

“LOVE THE SINNER...”

The appeal of sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts, especially for Christian parents, hinges on the belief that helping people to “leave the LGBTQ lifestyle” is the most loving thing you can do for a person. People are genuinely concerned for the souls of their LGBTQ friends and family and look to sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts as a saving grace. In reality, the most common theme in testimonials submitted to QCF’s UNCHANGED ministry shows change efforts to be a path to destruction, with the truly life-giving transformation happening when LGBTQ people come to embrace their identity and subsequently experience the love of God and neighbor more.

1 Corinthians 13:3-7 tells us:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (NIV)

Love is kind. It does not depend on shame, fear, or coercion. Love rejoices with the truth. It need not deny the consensus of medical experts or scientists; it does not depend upon false testimony. It celebrates when we show the world all of who we are rather than fragments based on what others want us to be. Love protects. It shelters us from the storm rather than exposing us to torturous practices that contribute to depression, despair, and suicidality.

Ultimately, Christians believe the fulfillment of the law is love. When baptized in religion, sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts and ex-gay or -trans theology may cloak themselves in words of love, but the toxic fruit they produce ultimately show them to be a false gospel.



DARREN CALHOUN

“After I came out as gay at 17, I remember being eager to meet other gay people because the only ones I knew were from an internet chatroom. I didn’t meet many gay friends at the time, but I did meet Christians who insisted that being gay wasn’t God’s plan for my life. One of the themes of that time was the constant threat of losing my salvation. Like a carrot being dangled in front of a rabbit, the promise of heaven was always just out of my reach. This dynamic kept me following the instructions of my church leaders—often to the detriment of my sense of self and well-being. I gave up attending university, and I gave up my photography business, friends, and even family for the promise of belonging in God’s Kingdom.”

“GO AND SIN NO MORE:” WHAT MUST CHANGE

Ex-gay ministries say that “change is possible.” In one sense, of course, this is true. We can always change how we treat each other for the better, and the Christian walk is about striving to become more Christ-like. This does not mean that we can or should change our fundamental sexual orientation or gender identity, any more than we should try to change what hand we naturally write with. QCF Board member and conversion therapy survivor, Darren Calhoun, expresses this sentiment beautifully, saying:

Our scriptures encourage us to change and grow to be more like Jesus—loving, generous, truthful, and merciful...But there are some things about us that God doesn't want to change, because God made us who we are, in our “innermost being,” as the Psalmist says. And God made us for good, all created in God's image and likeness. It is from this place that we do the difficult and nuanced work of figuring out what in us must change because it's not like God and what is absolutely a reflection of the divine working within us.

From the first pages of Genesis to the last chapters in Revelation, we see human understanding of God and God's relationship to Creation change and shift. Food laws, circumcision, and purity rituals all evolved and eventually faded out of practice for most

Christians despite the historical significance of these religious traditions. From start to finish, the Bible is full of surprising changes and disruptions - not least of which, the moment on a road to Damascus when God actually mandates a name-change for Paul - but the common denominator is a transformation that brings people closer to God. Like Peter in Acts 10, one ought not call unclean anything that God has made clean, but instead, discern what is wholesome based on God's law of love.

Do not be
conformed to
this world but
be transformed
by the renewing
of your minds,
so that you may
discern what is
the will of God—
what is good and
acceptable
and perfect.

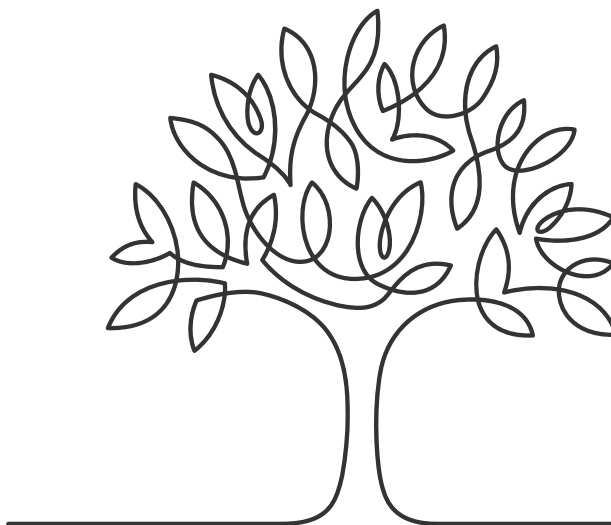
ROMANS 12:2 (NRSV)

THE GOOD NEWS: ACCEPTANCE SAVES LIVES

The Trevor Project has found that being part of a loving and accepting religious community is an important part of many LGBTQ young people's lives, and QCF's members attest every day to the resilience of LGBTQ Christians. Mental health professionals agree: the LGBTQ community's higher rates of mental illness and suicidality should be attributed to social stigma and discrimination, not anything inherently wrong with their sexual orientation or gender identity. When LGBTQ people are embraced for who they are, they are fully capable of flourishing.

Genesis 1 declares that all people bear the image and likeness of God, and that when God looked over all of creation, God called it "good." There are no caveats or fine print or unspoken rules or expectations that you have to abide by to stay in God's good graces. Song of Solomon 4:7 says, "You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you" (NIV)

Whole-hearted acceptance from friends and family is vital to the health and well-being of all people, and especially of our LGBTQ neighbors. Today, people of faith in particular have an important role to play in that acceptance. The Trevor Project recently released [a study](#) on the effect of religious condemnation on LGBTQ youth. Unfortunately, the study found that religiosity was not a trait correlated with lower rates of suicide for LGBTQ youth in the same way that being a member of a faith community appears to help protect their straight and cisgender peers. On the other hand, LGBTQ youth who reported not hearing their parents use religion to say negative things about being LGBTQ were at half the risk for attempting suicide in the past year. Our faith communities can do better, and ending efforts to change people's sexual orientation or gender identity is the first step.



CONCLUSION

Christians of good faith can and often do disagree on matters of deep theological importance. But when statistics and evidence all point to the damage that is being done to LGBTQ people through conversion therapy and ex-gay theology, when we can hear their stories of pointless suffering and shattered faith, the Christian community should repent.

If you glean nothing else from this document, we hope it is the understanding that your faith community's practices around LGBTQ inclusion and affirmation matter. Like Jacob wrestling with the Lord, you may come away from reading this feeling wounded in seeing that Christians have hurt LGBTQ people in ways we didn't intend and for reasons that may have been misguided. In the end, Jacob left the encounter with a limp, but he was blessed for his struggle. Change is hard, but sometimes it is necessary. By recognizing that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts harm LGBTQ people, you can help put an end to it. By transforming how the Christian church engages with LGBTQ people, we can save lives.

*In the interest of appealing to the diversity of Christian translation preferences, we have opted to cite multiple translations, including the New International Version (NIV) and The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV).

THE GOOD FRUIT STATEMENT ON LGBTQ CONVERSION THERAPY

The Bible teaches Christians to go beyond what is legally required and do what is good. As part of doing good, Romans 13:10 declares, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor..." (NIV). Let taking this pledge be a first step to better loving our LGBTQ neighbors.

Christians are called to love and care for our neighbors, including those who are LGBTQ. Recognizing that conversion therapy and other change efforts bear bad fruit, I will commit to respecting the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of LGBTQ siblings by refraining from trying to change their sexual orientation or gender identity through my words, deeds, ministries, and policies and I will actively encourage my faith community to do the same.

RESOURCES

LGBTQ Identity and Christian Theology

- [Q Christian Fellowship](#)
- *Scripture, Ethics, and the Possibility of Same-Sex Relationships* by Karen Keen
- *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* by James Brownson
- *God and The Gay Christian* by Matthew Vines
- *Changing Our Mind* by David Gushee
- *Radical Love* by Patrick Cheng

Making My Church Safer for LGBTQ People

- QCF [Relational Guide for Clergy](#)
- [ChurchClarity.org](#)
- [EstuarySpace.org](#)
- [Religiosity and Suicidality among LGBTQ Youth](#)
- [Oriented to Love](#) by Christians for Social Action

Finding Community

- [TrevorSpace](#) — An online international peer-to-peer community for LGBTQ young people and their friends.
- QCF [Community Groups](#)
- [PFLAG](#)
- [Beloved Arise](#)

History, Facts, and Figures

- [CURED Documentary](#)
- [Williams Institute Study](#)
- Peer-reviewed article, American Journal of Public Health (AJPH): [Self-Reported Conversion Efforts and Suicidality Among US LGBTQ Youths and Young Adults](#)

Self-Acceptance as an LGBTQ Christian

- [Q Christian Fellowship](#)
- *Does Jesus Really Love Me?* by Jeff Chu
- *Outside the Lines: How Embracing Queerness Will Transform Your Faith* by Mihee Kim-Kort
- *Blue Babies Pink: A Southern Coming Out Story in 44 Episodes* by B.T. Harman (available [as a blog](#) or as a podcast on iTunes)

LGBTQ Identity and Mental Health

- [The Trevor Project Lifeline, Text, and Chat \(suicide prevention and crisis intervention services\)](#)
- [Suicide Prevention and Warning Signs](#)
- The Trevor Project [2021 LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Survey](#)
- [TransLifeline](#)
- [American Psychological Association LGBT Resources](#)

Becoming an Ally

- [Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People](#)
- QCF [Relational Guide for Allies](#)
- QCF [Relational Guide for Parents of Newly Out LGBTQ+ People](#)
- [Supporting Black LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#)
- [How To Support Bisexual Youth: Ways to Care for Young People Who Are Attracted to More Than One Gender](#)

Gender Identity

- *Transforming: The Bible and The Lives of Transgender Christians* by Austen Hartke
- QCF [Affirmation Guide for Trans and Gender-Expansive Identities](#)
- Trevor Project [A Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth](#)

Stories of Survivors

- [UNCHANGED Movement](#)
- [Pray Away Documentary](#) (available on Netflix)
- *Torn* by Justin Lee
- [Boy Erased \(film\)](#)
- [Trapped: The Alex Cooper Story](#)
- *Outlove* by [Julie Rodgers](#)

Other Trevor Project and QCF Resources

- [The Trevor Project Resources](#)
- [Trevor Support Center](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Theology 101](#)
- [Family Resources](#)
- [More Resources](#)

LGBTQ TERMINOLOGY

Bisexual: Describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Change Efforts: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts refers to any of several dangerous and discredited practices aimed at changing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. May also be referred to as conversion therapy, gender critical therapy, reparative therapy, or ex-gay ministries.

Cisgender Person: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the social and cultural expectations typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. The abbreviation cis may also be used.

Gay: Describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender OR a man/male-aligned person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other men.

Gender Dysphoria: The distress caused when a person's assigned sex at birth and assumed gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

Gender Identity: One's innermost concept of self as man, woman, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be aligned with or different from their so-called 'sex' assigned at birth.

Heterosexual: Describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to a person of the opposite gender. Also known as "straight."

Lesbian: Describes a woman or woman-aligned person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTQ: An umbrella term that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or questioning.

Medical Transition: "Transitioning" is the process a transgender person goes through to discover and/or affirm their gender identity. This can include social, medical, and/or physical components. Gender affirming medical care can include affirming therapies, treatments to postpone physical changes, known as "puberty blockers," as well as treatments that lead to physical changes that would affirm one's gender identity, including hormones and surgical procedures. It is important to know that not all transgender people can or want to undergo medical transition, and a person's gender identity is not dependent on medical care.

Nonbinary: A term refers to individuals who identify as neither man nor woman, both man and woman, or a combination of man or woman. It is an identity term that some use exclusively, while others may use it interchangeably with terms like genderqueer, gender creative, gender nonconforming, gender diverse, or gender expansive. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may understand the identity as falling under the transgender umbrella, and may thus identify as transgender. Sometimes abbreviated as NB or Enby.

Queer: Describes a person who is not straight and/or cisgender. The term began as a slur, but has been partially reclaimed and is used as a catch-all identifier by some in the LGBTQ community. Others continue to find it offensive. Note: Should only ever be used as an adjective, and may be offensive to use as a noun.

Sex Assigned at Birth: The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes. It is important we don't simply use "sex" to describe people's identity, because gendered characteristics in humans occur along a spectrum and because of its role in transphobia (sex doesn't always equal gender).

Sexual Orientation: The presence or absence of an inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.

Transgender Person: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the 'sex' they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. (Note: Transgender identity does not depend on medically transitioning through either hormone therapy or surgical interventions.) Also known as "trans."